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Article published May 10. 2008 10:59AM

Nuclear power discussion attracts more than 100

By Tari Trott

More than 100 people turned up at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute to hear what benefits nuclear power has for Bermuda.

Organised by Mike Hardy, a Bermuda resident for 30 years, yesterday's main speaker was Gert Claasen from South African power company Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (Pty) Limited (PBMR).

Mr. Claasen also met with officials from the Ministry of Energy and Belco. He reported of the meeting: "I was told the Government here in Bermuda is writing a green paper on the future of energy requirements for the Island.

"And I discussed with them to consider among their options, nuclear power. Most nuclear power stations in the world are admittedly very large.

"They generate in excess of 1,000 mega watts which is far too large for a climate like Bermuda. However this is where the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor that is being developed in South Africa comes into play.

"This is a smaller-scale reactor and it's not only smaller it's what we call inherently safe and that makes it impossible for a (deadly accident) such as Chernobyl (in 1986) to happen within the design of this unit."

Additionally, he added his company's technology can be built in a modular fashion allowing one unit to become an "extended unit" over a period of time as demand for electricity grows.

Mr. Hardy cited Global Warming and its effects in the Caribbean and Bermuda as reasons why Bermuda should be considering alternative fuel sources like nuclear energy.

"When I originally got into this I was looking at alternative fuels and maybe using solar and wind in my house but I came across an article about another alternative; nuclear energy.

"It mentioned small nuclear plants. I Googled the subject and found PBMR and discovered they produce plants the same size as Belco's current capacity."

Most sections of the Island's senior and junior schools attended the forum, plus civil servants and people from the private sector, Mr. Hardy pointed out.

However, nuclear energy remains a controversial and sometimes political subject. Environmentalist Stuart Hayward said he had an open mind when considering alternative energy but expressed deep concern about Bermuda going nuclear.

Also, sustainable lifestyle group Greenrock was also cautious about nuclear power and called for Bermuda to develop a comprehensive long term energy plan and encouraged exploration of solar, wind and biofuels.
